

WILLIAMS-SONOMA

MEXICANA



MEXICAN

Fresh guacamole served with homemade tortilla chips, chicken enchiladas baked in a savory salsa roja, warm tortilla soup topped with diced avocado and melting cheese. Whether you crave a light summer snack or hearty winter meal, the spicy heat and rich flavor of Mexican food always satisfies.

Williams-Sonoma Collection Mexican offers more than 40 delicious recipes, including classics and inspiring new ideas. In these pages, you will find tempting suggestions for every course, from little bites and soups to satisfying main dishes and sweet desserts. This vividly photographed, full-color recipe collection, appealing to both novice and experienced cooks, will become an essential addition to your kitchen bookshelf.

"I urge you to try these recipes and to bring one of the world's favorite cuisines into your own kitchen."

Mexico's rich and diverse culinary traditions include countless complex and vibrant dishes. In these pages, you will find recipes that capture the beat of the cuisine, from mole poblano, a long-simmered blend of chiles, seeds, and

spices, to bright-flavored ceviche dressed with fresh citrus juice. A chapter on desserts also tempts, whether you crave chocolate cake with chile-infused whipped cream or coffee and Kahlua flan.

Williams-Sonoma Collection Mexican offers more than 40 recipes, including well-loved classics and many other timeless dishes. For a casual dinner, fill warm corn tortillas with tender morsels of carnitas or chunks of fresh fish lightly fried to a crisp golden brown. Or, plan a summer supper of watercress salad tossed with orange, jicama, and avocado; creamy corn and poblano chile soup; and delicate sea bass topped with salsa verde. Versatile and delicious, Mexican food is always irresistible.

Full-color photographs of each dish help you decide which one to prepare, and each recipe is accompanied by a photographic side note that highlights a key ingredient or technique, making Mexican more than just a superb collection of recipes. Including all the basics and an extensive glossary, this essential volume will help you create and enjoy many delicious Mexican meals.

Front cover: Guacamole with Homemade Tortilla Chips, page 10.

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CHUCK WILLIAMS, general editor, has helped to revolutionize cooking in America. He opened his first Williams-Sonoma store in the California wine country town of Sonoma in 1956. More than 200 stores are now open in the United States.

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INTRODUCTION

Mexico has one of the world's most diverse culinary histories. Its earliest inhabitants were

sustained for thousands of years by corn and beans, enlivened with ingredients such as squashes, tomatoes, chiles, and chocolate—all native to the New World. With the arrival of the Spanish came the additions of rice, wheat, and citrus fruits, as well as spices from the Far East. When one considers the diverse Mexican landscape—expansive coasts, high mountains, and dense jungles—and the range of ingredients each region offers, it is easy to see how Mexico has developed such a rich culinary heritage. This book aims to share this richness with you through its recipes, including a long-simmered mole poblano, a simple ceviche, and an innovative chocolate cake flavored with a touch of ancho chile. In addition, informative side notes will help you familiarize yourself with the history of Mexican cooking as well as its techniques and ingredients. I urge you to try these recipes and to bring one of the world's favorite cuisines into your own kitchen.

THE CLASSICS

Every part of Mexico has its own regional foods, but there are some dishes that are known throughout the country. Guacamole is served everywhere, as are tamales, chilaquiles, and

enchiladas. There are also some recipes, such as stuffed poblano chiles with walnut sauce, Veracruz-style red snapper, and mole poblano, that are unique to just one region but are so celebrated that they have become classics. Buen provecho!

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GUACAMOLE WITH HOMEMADE TORTILLA CHIPS



PREPARING AVOCADOS

To test if an avocado is ripe, gently press it; it should give slightly. To fully ripen, place it in a paper bag with a banana. Ethylene gases emitted by the banana will speed the ripening process. To prepare an avocado, halve lengthwise with a knife, cutting around the pit. Rotate the halves to separate. Set the half with the pit on a work surface and, using the heel of the knife blade, strike the pit and twist to draw it out. To remove the flesh, ease a spoon between the flesh and skin, or peel the skin with a knife. Or, while still in the skin, cut the flesh into cubes (see recipe method, page 13).

To make the chips, stack the tortillas in 6 piles of 3 tortillas each. Using a sharp knife, cut each pile into 4–6 wedges. Spread the wedges out in a single layer, cover with a heavy kitchen towel to prevent them from curling, and let dry out for several hours.

Preheat the oven to 250°F (120°C). Pour the oil to a depth of at least 1 inch (2.5 cm) into a deep, heavy frying pan and heat over medium-high heat to 375°F (190°C) on a deep-frying thermometer, or until a piece of tortilla dropped into the oil quickly becomes crisp (see Note). Add a handful of the wedges and fry, tossing them with a slotted spoon, until they are crisp and lightly golden, about 30 seconds. Do not let them darken, or they will be bitter. Using the slotted spoon, transfer to paper towels to drain. Repeat with the remaining wedges. Season them with sea salt, if desired, while still warm, and keep warm in the oven until all are fried.

To make the guacamole, in a *molcajete* or a bowl, mash 4 tablespoons (1½ oz/45 g) of the onion, the chiles, and the garlic (if using) with a pestle or fork to form a coarse paste. Add the avocado and mash until well incorporated. Stir in all but 2 tablespoons of the tomato and all of the cilantro and lime juice. Season to taste with sea salt. Let stand for a few minutes before serving. Sprinkle the guacamole with the remaining onion and tomato and serve accompanied with the warm tortilla chips.

Note: Do not let the temperature of the oil rise above 375°F (190°C). If it reaches 400°F (200°C) or more, it may start to smoke, then burst into flame.

Serving Tip: You may also serve the guacamole with jicama sticks. To prepare, peel away the skin from a 1-lb (500-g) jicama. Halve lengthwise, then cut each half into slices ½ inch (12 mm) thick. Cut the slices into sticks ½ inch wide and sprinkle with fresh lime juice.

MAKES 2½ CUPS (20 OZ/625 G), OR 8 APPETIZER SERVINGS

FOR THE TORTILLA CHIPS:

18 white corn tortillas, the thinnest possible, 4–6 inches (10–15 cm) in diameter

Canola or safflower oil for deep-frying

Sea salt (optional)

FOR THE GUACAMOLE:

6 tablespoons (2 oz/60 g) finely chopped white onion

2 serrano chiles, seeded (page 39) and finely chopped

1 clove garlic, minced (optional)

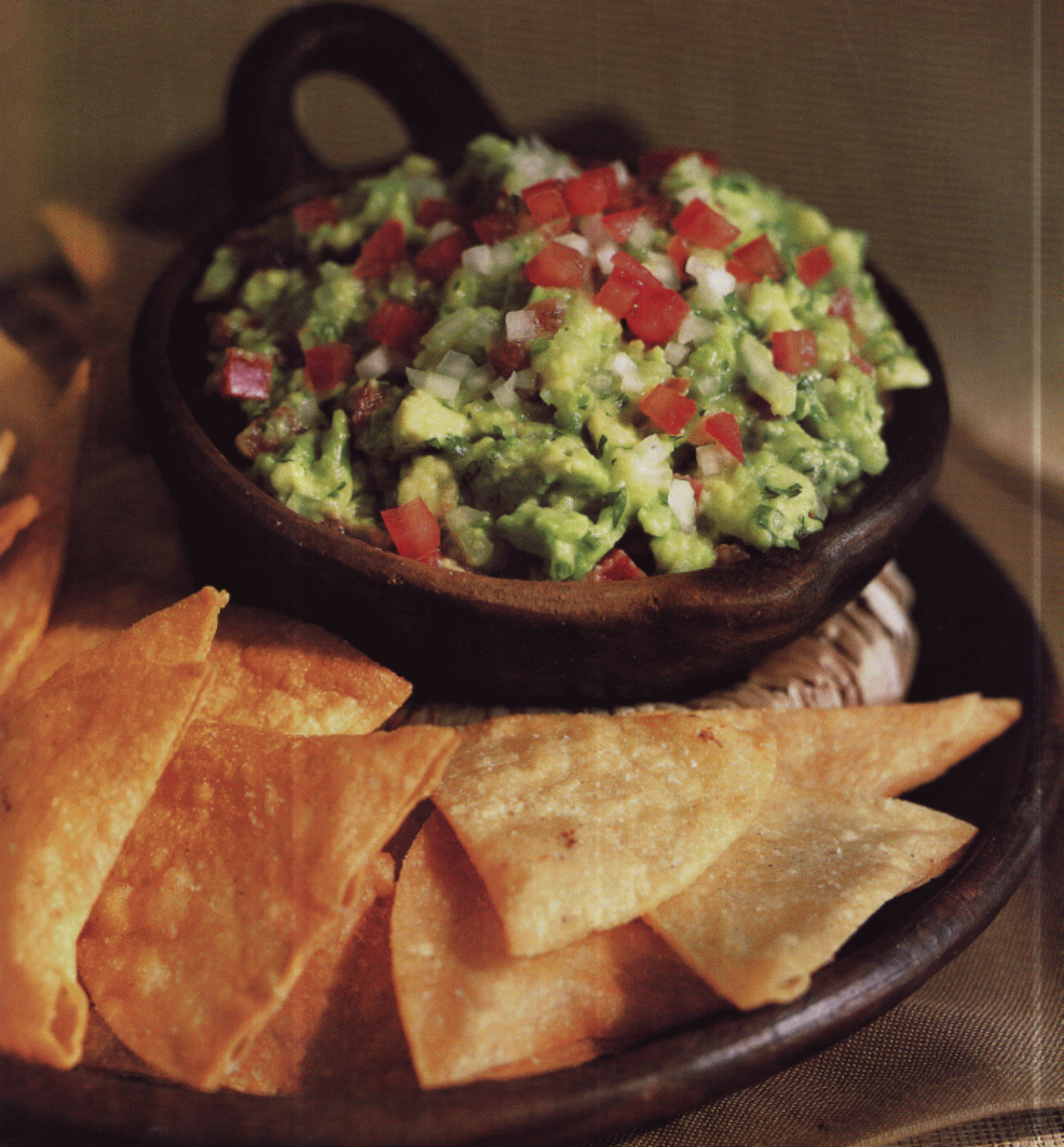
2 ripe Hass avocados, halved, pitted, and peeled (far left)

1 large, ripe tomato, finely chopped

¼ cup (¼ oz/7 g) lightly packed fresh cilantro (fresh coriander) leaves, finely chopped

1 tablespoon fresh lime juice

Sea salt



CEVICHE

¾ lb (375 g) salmon fillet
½ lb (250 g) bay scallops
or sea scallops, cut into
½-inch (12-mm) cubes
½ white onion, cut into
½-inch (6-mm) dice
1 cup (8 fl oz/250 ml) fresh
lime juice
½ cup (4 fl oz/125 ml)
fresh orange juice
4 ripe plum (Roma)
tomatoes or 1 large ripe
tomato, cut into ¼-inch
(6-mm) dice
3 serrano or jalapeño
chiles, minced
¼ cup (¼ oz/7 g) loosely
packed fresh cilantro
(fresh coriander) leaves,
finely chopped, plus whole
leaves for garnish
3 tablespoons extra-virgin
olive oil
Sea salt
1 ripe Hass avocado
Tortilla chips, homemade
(page 10) or purchased

Remove the skin from the salmon fillet if it is still intact and run your fingers over the fillet to check for and remove any embedded bones, using tweezers if necessary. Cut the fish into ½-inch (12-mm) cubes and place in a large glass or stainless-steel bowl. Add the scallops, onion, and lime and orange juices and toss to mix well. Cover and refrigerate until the fish is opaque throughout when a piece is sliced open, about 4 hours.

Just before serving, drain off and discard the excess juice from the bowl. Add the tomatoes, chiles, chopped cilantro, and olive oil and mix well. Season with ½ teaspoon sea salt.

Halve the avocado and remove the pit (page 10). Using a knife, and holding one avocado half, flesh side up, cut lengthwise through the flesh to make slices ¼ inch (6 mm) thick, being careful not to cut through the skin. Then make crosswise cuts ¼ inch thick, to create cubes. Using a large spoon, scoop the cubes from the skin. Repeat with the remaining half. Add the avocado cubes to the fish mixture and toss gently.

Divide the ceviche among small clear-glass bowls, wineglasses, or martini glasses. Garnish each serving with cilantro leaves. Serve with the tortilla chips.

Serving Tip: You can omit the tortilla chips and instead serve the ceviche tostada-style. Follow the instructions on page 40 for frying tortillas. Place a fried tortilla on each individual plate and mound the ceviche on top.

MAKES 6 APPETIZER SERVINGS



ABOUT CEVICHE

One of the simplest ways to serve seafood, ceviche is bite-sized pieces of very fresh raw fish and/or shellfish "cooked" by the acid in fresh citrus juice, rather than by heat. The origin of ceviche remains a subject of debate; however, its first recorded appearance in Mexico was in Acapulco in the sixteenth century. The most common theory is that the recipe arrived with long-distance fishermen from northern Chile and Peru. Other experts believe that it arrived on the galleons that plied the waters between Manila and Acapulco.



CHICKEN ENCHILADAS WITH SALSA ROJA



ANCHO CHILES

The ancho, the dried form of the fresh poblano chile, is used extensively in sauces and moles and for stuffing. Ancho means "wide" in Spanish, and the broad shoulders (at least 2 inches/5 cm wide) of this dark burgundy chile are what distinguish it from most of its dried cousins. The mulato chile looks similar, but its skin is almost black when the chile is held up to the light. The ancho and mulato should not be used interchangeably, as the ancho has a rather sweet, chocolaty, fruity flavor, and the mulato is not sweet at all.

Make the *salsa roja*, or red chile sauce, by tearing the chiles into large pieces. Put them in a heatproof bowl and add boiling water to cover. Weight the chiles down with a plate and let soak until soft, about 15 minutes. Drain the chiles. In batches, in a blender, process the chiles, tomatoes with juice, chopped onion, garlic, and oregano until smooth, adding $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (4 fl oz/125 ml) or more of the chicken stock as needed to achieve a very smooth consistency.

Preheat the oven to 325°F (165°C). In a frying pan over medium heat, heat 1 tablespoon of the oil until it is shimmering but not smoking. Pour in the chile sauce and cook, stirring, until quite thick, about 2 minutes. Add the remaining chicken stock and cook, stirring frequently, until thick, about 5 minutes. Taste and adjust the seasoning with sea salt. Remove from the heat and set aside; keep warm. Spoon a thin layer of the chile sauce on the bottom of a 9-by-13-inch (23-by-33-cm) baking dish and keep warm.

In a frying pan over medium heat, heat the remaining 3 tablespoons oil until sizzling hot. Using tongs and a spatula, very quickly drag the tortillas one at a time through the oil to soften them on both sides. Pat dry with paper towels. Dip a softened tortilla into the warm sauce in the frying pan and then lay it on a plate. Spread 1 heaping tablespoon of the shredded chicken near the edge closest to you, roll up the tortilla, and place, seam side down, in the prepared baking dish. Repeat with the remaining tortillas and chicken, arranging the rolled tortillas side by side in the dish. When the dish is filled, spoon the remaining chile sauce evenly over the tortillas. Bake the enchiladas until heated through, about 5 minutes. Divide the enchiladas among warmed individual plates and top with the *crema*, onion rings, and radishes. Serve at once, as the enchiladas will quickly become soggy.

MAKES 12 ENCHILADAS, OR 5 OR 6 SERVINGS

10 ancho chiles, seeded
(page 108)

1 can (14½ oz/455 g) diced
tomatoes, with juice

½ white onion, coarsely
chopped, plus 1 small white
onion, thinly sliced and
separated into rings

6 cloves garlic

1 teaspoon dried oregano,
preferably Mexican

1½ cups (12 fl oz/375 ml)
chicken stock (page 110) or
prepared low-sodium broth

4 tablespoons (2 fl oz/60 ml)
canola or safflower oil

Sea salt

12 white corn tortillas,
about 6 inches (15 cm)
in diameter

2 cups (12 oz/375 g)
coarsely shredded poached
(page 113) or leftover
roasted chicken

½ cup (4 fl oz/125 ml)
crema (page 51)

6 radishes, trimmed and
thinly sliced



CHILAQUILES WITH SALSA VERDE

1 lb (500 g) tomatillos,
husked and rinsed
(far right)

4 serrano chiles

2 cloves garlic

½ white onion, coarsely
chopped, plus 1 or more
thin white onion slices,
separated into rings

1 tablespoon canola or
safflower oil

Sea salt

½ lb (250 g) thick tortilla
chips, homemade (page 10)
or purchased (about 8 cups)

¼ cup (⅓ oz/10 g) coarsely
chopped fresh cilantro
(fresh coriander)

1 cup (8 fl oz/250 ml)
crema (page 51)

½ cup (2½ oz/75 g)
crumbled *queso fresco*
(page 115) or mild feta
cheese

Put the tomatillos in a small saucepan and add water to barely cover. Bring to a simmer over medium heat and cook until the tomatillos begin to soften, about 5 minutes. Add the chiles and garlic and continue cooking until the tomatillos are soft, about 5 minutes longer. Remove from the heat.

Using a slotted spoon, transfer the tomatillos, chiles, and garlic to a blender; reserve the cooking liquid. Add the chopped onion and ½ cup (4 fl oz/125 ml) of the cooking liquid to the blender and process until well blended, leaving some texture.

In a large frying pan or *cazuela* over medium-high heat, heat the oil until it is shimmering but not smoking. Pour in the tomatillo mixture all at once and stir vigorously. Stir in an additional ½ cup of the reserved cooking liquid, along with ½ teaspoon sea salt, reduce the heat to low, and cook, uncovered, until the sauce thickens, about 10 minutes. Add more liquid if necessary.

Just before serving, carefully stir the tortilla chips and cilantro into the sauce and continue cooking until softened but not mushy, about 5 minutes. Taste and adjust the seasoning with sea salt.

Scoop the mixture into a warmed serving dish or onto warmed individual plates. To garnish, spoon on the *crema* and scatter the onion rings and cheese on top.

Make-Ahead Tip: The sauce can be made up to 3 days in advance. Let cool, cover, and refrigerate, then reheat over medium-low heat, thinning with water if necessary.

Serving Tip: This recipe makes a wonderful breakfast dish for company or can be served as a light supper.

MAKES 4 SERVINGS



TOMATILLOS

Despite its appearance, a tomatillo is not a type of green tomato, although both are members of the nightshade family. The tomatillo is covered with a parchmentlike calyx that, when removed, reveals a fruit that looks like a firm green or purplish cherry tomato. The fruits, which have a unique texture and tart flavor, are the basis for many cooked sauces, *pipelines*, and moles, and are occasionally used raw in salsas. Carefully rinse off the sticky residue that covers the skin before using.



STUFFED POBLANO CHILES WITH WALNUT SAUCE



WALNUT SAUCE

A celebrated version of *chiles rellenos*, these stuffed chiles are usually made in early autumn when a new crop of milky-white walnuts is available. To make the sauce, in a blender, process 2 cups (8 oz/250 g) walnuts; 2 cups (1 lb/500 g) sour cream; 12 oz (375 g) cream cheese, at room temperature; and 1 cup (8 fl oz/250 ml) whole milk. Add 1 teaspoon sea salt, $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground cinnamon, and $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg and purée until the mixture is smooth. Taste and stir in $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon sugar, if needed. Cover and refrigerate to chill well.

To make the *picadillo*, in a large, heavy frying pan or Dutch oven over medium-high heat, heat the oil until it shimmers. Add the onion and sauté until lightly colored, about 1 minute. Stir in the pork and cook until it is no longer pink and just starts to brown, about 6 minutes. Add the tomatoes and juice and cook, uncovered, until the meat is thoroughly cooked and tender, 10–15 minutes. Reduce the heat to low and add the apple, pear, plantain, almonds, raisins, and *acitrón*. Stir gently, then add the cinnamon, cloves, and $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon sea salt, or more to taste. (It may need more salt than you think.) Continue to cook, stirring from time to time, until most of the moisture has evaporated, about 5 minutes. Remove from the heat.

Stuff the chiles with the *picadillo* until plump and just barely closed. Place on a serving platter or individual plates, cover with the chilled walnut sauce, sprinkle with the pomegranate seeds, and garnish with the parsley. Serve at once.

Notes: This renowned dish is called chiles en nogada in Mexico. It is resplendent with the red, green, and white colors of the Mexican flag and was created by the early convent nuns in Puebla in honor of a visit by a special guest. This recipe is always served around Independence Day, September 15, when the new crop of walnuts is ready and pomegranates are ripe. When buying the poblanos, buy a couple extra in case you tear any when you are peeling them.

Make-Ahead Tip: The picadillo, a well-seasoned mixture of minced meat and fruit, can be made up to 1 day in advance. Let cool, cover, and refrigerate, then reheat over medium-low heat.

MAKES 12 STUFFED CHILES; OR 6–12 SERVINGS

FOR THE PICADILLO:

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup (2 fl oz/60 ml) canola or safflower oil

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup (2 $\frac{1}{2}$ oz/75 g) finely chopped white onion

2 lb (1 kg) lean pork loin, finely chopped

1 can (28 oz/875 g) chopped tomatoes, with juice

$\frac{2}{3}$ cup (4 oz/125 g) each peeled and finely cubed apple, pear, and ripe plantain (page 115)

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup (1 $\frac{1}{2}$ oz/45 g) chopped blanched almonds

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup (2 oz/60 g) raisins, chopped

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup (2 oz/60 g) finely cubed *acitrón* (page 113) or candied pineapple

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ground cinnamon

$\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon ground cloves

Sea salt

12 large poblano chiles, roasted, peeled, and seeded, with stem intact (page 106; see Notes)

Walnut Sauce (far left)

Pomegranate seeds and fresh flat-leaf (Italian) parsley sprigs for garnish



PORK TAMALES WITH RED CHILE SAUCE



WRAPPING TAMALES

In Spanish, the singular of "tamales" is *tamal*. To wrap a *tamal*, lay a husk in one palm, with the pointed end on your wrist. Spread a generous tablespoon of the dough thinly in the center of the upper half and 4 inches (10 cm) down the husk, leaving a margin on all sides. Place a few pieces of the meat and some sauce down the center of the dough, then fold the long edges of the husk over the filling, overlapping them and forming a narrow *tamal*. Bring up the pointed end of the husk until it is even with the cut end. Tie the end with a husk strip to secure.

Put the pork, garlic, peppercorns, and 1 teaspoon sea salt in a large saucepan or Dutch oven. Add 4 cups (32 fl oz/1 l) water or as needed to cover. Bring to a low boil over medium-high heat, skimming off any foam that forms on the surface. Reduce the heat to low, cover, and simmer the pork until tender, about 45 minutes. Remove from the heat and let the pork cool in the broth. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the pork to a bowl and set aside. Spoon off as much fat from the surface of the broth as possible; there should be 3 cups (24 fl oz/750 ml) broth remaining. If not, add water to equal that amount.

In a small bowl, stir together the ground chiles and cumin and then stir in $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (4 fl oz/125 ml) of the broth to make a thin paste. Stir the chile paste back into the broth, mixing well.

In a large, dry frying pan over low heat, toast the flour, stirring constantly, for a few seconds, just until it starts to brown. Drizzle in enough oil to saturate the flour and continue to stir until the mixture is a rich brown. Stirring constantly, gradually add the chile broth, raise the heat to medium, and cook, stirring frequently, until the sauce thickens and no lumps remain, about 3 minutes. Add the sugar, oregano, and sea salt to taste. Pour half of the sauce into the pork and broth and set aside. Cover the remaining sauce in the pan with plastic wrap pressed directly onto the surface; set aside. Rinse the corn husks and then soak in hot water to cover until pliable, about 15 minutes.

In a large bowl, stir together the *masa harina*, chile powder, baking powder, and 1 tablespoon sea salt. Stir in enough lukewarm water, 3–4 cups (24–32 oz/750 ml–1 l), to make a moist batter. In a small bowl using an electric mixer, beat the lard until creamy, at least 5 minutes. Add to the *masa harina* mixture and continue beating until the mixture is quite light and spreadable, about 5 minutes longer, adding up to $\frac{1}{4}$ cup (3 fl oz/80 ml) more water if too dry. Taste and adjust the seasoning with sea salt.

1 lb (500 g) boneless pork butt or shoulder, cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch (12-mm) cubes

3 cloves garlic

4 peppercorns

Sea salt

2 ancho chiles, toasted and seeded (page 108), then finely ground (page 114)

2 árbol chiles, toasted and seeded (page 108), then finely ground (page 114)

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground cumin

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup (2 $\frac{1}{2}$ oz/75 g) all-purpose (plain) flour

About 2 tablespoons canola or safflower oil

1 teaspoon sugar

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon dried oregano, preferably Mexican

50 dried corn husks

4 cups (2 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb/1.25 kg) *masa harina* (page 35)

2 teaspoons pure chile powder (page 113)

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons baking powder

1–1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups (8–12 oz/250–375 g) fresh pork lard (page 114) or solid vegetable shortening, at room temperature

Drain the husks and pat dry. Set aside the 30 best husks in a pile for making the tamales. Use the remaining, more ragged husks for lining the steamer and for making ties. Fill the bottom of a large pot with water to a depth of about 3 inches (7.5 cm). Add a clean coin to the pot; when the water boils, the coin will rattle, letting you know that there is still enough water for steaming. Place a steamer basket or circular cake cooling rack in the pot, making certain that the water level is not touching the bottom of the basket or rack. (You may need to set the rack on 4 inverted, heatproof custard cups or ramekins.)

Cover the bottom of the steamer basket or rack with some of the ragged corn husks and put an inverted metal funnel, or an empty tuna fish can with the top and bottom removed, on top. Line up the good corn husks, the dough, and the filling. Tear some of the ragged husks into narrow strips to use as ties. Prepare the tamales (*far left*) and arrange in the pot for steaming (*right*). Cover the tamales with more ragged corn husks, a clean kitchen towel, and a layer of plastic wrap so no steam escapes. Cover with a tight lid, bring to a low boil over medium-high heat, and steam without opening. (If at any time you do not hear the coin rattling in the pot, take out the steamer basket and pour in more hot water.) After 50 minutes, take out a *tamal*, let it rest for several minutes, and then open it. It is done if the dough easily pulls away from the husk. If not, turn off the heat and let steam for another 10 minutes.

When the tamales are ready, remove from the pot and let sit for several minutes. Reheat the reserved sauce over low heat, adding more water if it is too thick. Remove the corn husks from the tamales, place 2 or 3 tamales on each individual plate, and pour some of the hot sauce over the top. Serve at once.

MAKES 30 TAMALES, OR 10-15 SERVINGS

(Photograph appears on following page.)



STEAMING TAMALES

To steam tamales, you will need a steamer basket or circular rack that fits in the bottom of a large pot, as well as an inverted metal funnel or an empty tuna fish can with the top and bottom removed. Together, these tools will allow you to perfectly steam the tamales without letting them come into contact with the water in the bottom of the pan. To arrange the tamales for steaming, starting in the center and working circularly, place each *tamal*, pointed end up and at a slightly vertical angle, in the steamer, with the first layer supported by the funnel or can in the center.



VERACRUZ-STYLE RED SNAPPER

1 whole red snapper, 3–3½ lb (1.5–1.75 kg), scaled and cleaned, with head on, or 6 red snapper fillets, about 5–6 oz (155–185 g) each

8 large cloves garlic

2 teaspoons fresh lime juice

Sea salt

FOR THE SAUCE:

¼ cup (2 fl oz/60 ml) olive oil

1 large white onion, thinly sliced

4 large cloves garlic, minced

3 lb (1.5 kg) ripe tomatoes, roasted and peeled (page 108), then finely chopped

20 small green pimiento-stuffed olives, each cut lengthwise into 4 slices

½ cup (¾ oz/20 g) coarsely chopped fresh flat-leaf (Italian) parsley leaves

3 bay leaves

3 pickled jalapeño chiles, cut lengthwise into strips, with 1 tablespoon pickling liquid

1 tablespoon capers

½ teaspoon each dried oregano, marjoram, and thyme, or 4 fresh sprigs each

Sea salt and freshly ground pepper

If using a whole fish, rinse it inside and out and pat dry. Prick through the skin of the fish with the tip of a knife every few inches on both sides. If using fillets, omit piercing. Using a mortar and pestle, mash the garlic to a paste and transfer it to a small bowl, or squeeze it through a garlic press. Add the lime juice and ½ teaspoon sea salt and mix well. If using a whole fish, rub the inside and outside of the fish with the garlic mixture. If using fillets, rub the paste over both sides of each fillet. Wrap the fish in plastic wrap and marinate in the refrigerator for at least 30 minutes or for up to 2 hours, turning the fish occasionally for even coating.

Preheat the oven to 350°F (180°C). To make the sauce, in a large, heavy frying pan over medium heat, heat the olive oil. Add the onion and sauté until soft, about 4 minutes. Add the garlic and continue cooking until golden, 1–2 minutes. Raise the heat to medium-high, add the tomatoes, and continue cooking, stirring frequently, until the sauce thickens, 5–7 minutes. Reduce the heat to low and stir in the olives, parsley, bay leaves, chiles and pickling liquid, and capers. Add the oregano, marjoram, thyme, and pepper to taste and simmer, stirring occasionally, until the flavors are well blended, 8–10 minutes. Season to taste with sea salt.

Lightly oil a large glass or ceramic baking dish. Unwrap the fish, place it in the dish, and spoon the sauce evenly over the top, discarding the bay leaves. Bake, basting occasionally with the sauce, just until the flesh is opaque throughout when tested in the thickest part, about 45 minutes for a whole fish or 8–10 minutes for fillets. Do not to overcook the fish. Serve directly from the baking dish or, using 2 spatulas, carefully transfer to a warmed platter.

Serving Tips: Garnish with whole pitted green olives, fresh flat-leaf (Italian) parsley sprigs, whole pickled jalapeño and güero chiles, and/or fresh bay leaves. Accompany with White Rice (page 110).

MAKES 6 SERVINGS



VERACRUZ CUISINE

Veracruz is a raucous port city on the Gulf of Mexico where seafood of all sorts is eaten morning, noon, and long into the night. The most famous of all of the city's dishes combines the silvery-tinged, deep-red-skinned snapper caught in local waters with an equally colorful sauce. When a dish is described as *a la Veracruzana*, it refers to this thick, herby tomato sauce studded with olives and capers that originated in Spain. Pickled light yellow güero, or blond, chiles are always included as a garnish for both flavor and color.



MOLE POBLANO



MOLES

Mole poblano, one of the wonders of the Mexican culinary world, is reserved for special celebrations. Other moles—a word meaning “mixture” or “sauce”—are found throughout most of Mexico, but this nearly black, voluptuous dish, said to have originated in the tile-clad kitchen of the Convent of Santa Rosa in Puebla, epitomizes the culinary union of the Spanish and Mexican worlds. The original recipe mixed together over one hundred ingredients from both continents, along with exotic spices from Asia, to create the complex blend.

In a heavy frying pan over medium heat, melt 4 tablespoons of the lard. Add several chile pieces at a time and fry briefly on both sides just until they begin to change color, about 20 seconds. Lift out with tongs, draining off excess fat, and put in a bowl. When all the chiles are fried, cover them with very hot water, weight them down with a plate, and let soak until soft, about 20 minutes.

Add 1 tablespoon lard to the same pan, place over medium heat, and fry the raisins until they are plump, about 20 seconds. Scoop out with a slotted spoon, draining off excess fat, and put in a bowl. Fry the almonds in the same fat until lightly brown, about 5 minutes. Scoop out with the spoon, again draining off as much fat as possible, and add to the raisins. Add the plantain slices to the pan and fry, turning as needed, until golden, about 5 minutes. Transfer to paper towels to drain. Add more lard, if necessary, and fry the bread slice until golden and crisp, about 1 minute per side. Transfer to paper towels. Add the tortilla pieces and fry until just crisp, about 45 seconds. Drain on paper towels. Add the plantain, bread, and tortilla pieces to the nuts and raisins.

In a small, dry frying pan over medium heat, toast the sesame seeds, stirring constantly, until golden, about 2 minutes. Set aside 2 tablespoons for garnish and pour the rest into a small bowl. In the same pan, toast the ancho chile seeds over medium heat for 1 minute and add them to the sesame seeds. Toast the pumpkin seeds over medium heat for about 30 seconds and add to the rest of the seeds. Using the same pan, toast the aniseeds, coriander seeds, cloves, and cinnamon bark over medium heat, shaking the pan constantly, until very aromatic, just a few seconds. Add to the bowl holding the seeds and stir to mix. In small batches, grind the seed mixture in a spice grinder until pulverized. Set aside.

Remove the chiles from the water, reserving the water. In small batches, put the chiles and a little of the soaking water in a blender and process until very smooth.

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup (6 oz/180 g) fresh pork lard (page 114) or $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (6 fl oz/180 ml) canola oil

6 ancho chiles, seeded (page 108) and torn into large pieces, with 1 tablespoon seeds reserved

4 mulato chiles, seeded (page 108) and torn into large pieces

3 pasilla chiles, seeded (page 108) and torn into large pieces

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup (1 $\frac{1}{2}$ oz/45 g) raisins

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup (1 $\frac{1}{2}$ oz/45 g) almonds

$\frac{1}{4}$ plantain (page 115), very soft and ripe, peeled and sliced

1 thick slice day-old French bread or French roll

1 day-old corn tortilla, broken into large pieces

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup ($\frac{3}{4}$ oz/20 g) sesame seeds

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup (1 $\frac{1}{4}$ oz/37 g) raw hulled green pumpkin seeds

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon aniseeds

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon coriander seeds

2 whole cloves

2-inch (5-cm) piece true cinnamon bark (page 85)

10–12 cups (2½–3 qt/ 2.5–3 l) chicken or turkey stock (page 110) or prepared low-sodium broth

4 tomatoes, about 1 lb (500 g) total weight, roasted (page 108)

½ white onion, sliced and roasted (page 65)

3 cloves garlic, roasted (page 65)

½–1 tablet (1½–3 oz/ 45–90 g) Mexican chocolate, broken into small pieces

1 tablespoon sugar, if needed

Sea salt

FOR THE TURKEY:

3–4 lb (1.5–2 kg) boneless turkey breast halves with skin on

3 cups (24 fl oz/750 ml) chicken or turkey stock (page 110) or prepared low-sodium broth

½ white onion, thickly sliced

2 cloves garlic

Sea salt

Place a Dutch oven large enough to hold 5 qt (5 l) or a large *cazuela* over high heat, add 6 tablespoons (3 oz/90 g) lard, and heat until very hot and shimmering. Using a wooden spoon, press the chile mixture through a medium-mesh sieve held over the pan. Discard the solids. Fry, stirring constantly, until thick and the pan bottom is visible when scraped, 6–8 minutes. Reduce the heat to low, stir in 6 cups (48 fl oz/1.5 l) of the stock, and keep at a simmer.

In a blender, in 3 or 4 batches, process the roasted tomatoes, onion, and garlic, along with the fried raisins, almonds, plantain, bread, and tortilla, adding 1 cup (8 fl oz/250 ml) of the stock to each batch, until thoroughly blended. Stir into the chile mixture, along with the reserved ground seeds and spices. Continue cooking over low heat, stirring often, for 30 minutes longer.

Add half of the chocolate to the mole along with the sugar and sea salt to taste. Continue simmering for 20 minutes longer, stirring frequently and scraping the pan bottom, adding more stock if it becomes too thick. Taste again for salt and sugar, and if you want a stronger chocolate flavor, add the rest of the chocolate (it should add only a shadow of bitterness). Continue cooking until pools of oil form on the surface, at least 1 hour longer. For the best flavor, let cool, then cover and refrigerate overnight. Reheat the next day.

About 1½ hours before serving, cook the turkey. Put the turkey, stock, onion, garlic, and 1½ teaspoons sea salt in a Dutch oven. Add just enough water to cover the turkey. Cook over high heat until boiling, then reduce the heat to very low. Cook until the juices run clear when the turkey is pierced at the thickest part with a fork, about 15 minutes. Remove the turkey and let stand until cool enough to handle. Cut into slices ½ inch (12 mm) thick and spoon the mole over and around the turkey, sprinkle with the reserved sesame seeds, and serve.

MAKES 8 SERVINGS

(Photograph appears on following page.)



MEXICAN CHOCOLATE

Chocolate, made from the seeds of the cacao tree, a native of Mexico, was a sacred drink of the Maya, who sometimes flavored it with chile or mixed it with maize. Even its botanical genus, *Theobroma*, means “food of the gods.” Thus, it is not surprising that when the nuns created the now-famous mole poblano for some special visitors, they added chocolate to the pot. Other moles contain wisps of chocolate, but it is not always an essential ingredient. Today, so-called Mexican chocolate, a mixture of ground cacao, sugar, cinnamon, and sometimes almonds, is sold in large tablets.

